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NON-VIOLENT TEACHINGS OF GANDHI

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We find that much development and great achievements have been made in science and technology for human upliftment . These are external developments, but we have no internal or psychological development lack of which is the cause of violence . Many humanist thinkers and philosophers have contributed to build up a peaceful and perfect society. But there is a little impact of their message on human civilization . But with the help of modern science and technology , some political and social leaders of the world are performing inhuman actions day by day generating disintegration, violence, terrorism, war at national, international , religious, social and political levels . But perfect human civilization will not be evolved through violence, war and terrorism. So everyone should have an awareness of the theory of non-violence . There, is a great contribution of Mahatma Gandhi with regard to preach the glory of non- violence in accordance with the time -bound necessity of the society . In the midst of all types of violence of human society the cry of peace, non-violence and love is heard from the core of the hearts of common people of all the countries of the earth . Therefore in this paper an attempt has been made to give a systematic and a critical study of Mahatma Gandhi's theory of non-violence[1].

Indian Philosophy has emphasised the need of some cardinal virtues which everyone should try to practice . All the systems of Indian Philosophy, except the *Carvaka*, believe that the world is being directed by a moral law. They believe that every kind of action (good or bad) produces some tendencies and effects which the doer has to suffer. It is the belief in 'Law of Karma' which itself changes into maxiyim:- 'As you sow, so you reap', e.g. good actions generate good tendencies . Here there is a need of developing certain basic virtues . These would enable an individual to be on the right path. Indian Moral philosophy , e.g. The Yoga philosophy greatly influenced Gandhi. 'Yoga' literally means union , i.e. spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul. This sense is applied to the *Vedanta* also . The attainment of *moksa* , or union with ultimate reality is regarded as the supreme goal of life by all the systems of Indian philosophy . For attaining liberation the Yoga philosophy adopts the practical methodology called *astanga-yoga* which consists in (a) *Yama*: the five vows of non-violence (*ahimsá*) , truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), chasiity (brahmacarya) and non- acceptance (*aparigraha*) , (b) Niyama: cleanliness (*sauca*) , contentment (santosa), austerity or tapals

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(mental and physical discipline), svadhyaya (study of scriptures and chanting of mantras) and devotion of God (isvarapranidhana) are the Niyamas (observances). YS-II. 32 c) *Asana* (d) *Pranayama (*e) *Pratyahara* (f) *Dharana* (g) *Dhyana* and (h) *Samadhi.*

Gandhi admitted the first discipline -Yama i.e. the five vows of Yama. It is important to note that ahimsá comes first and therefore, ranks highest in Patanjali's *astanga- yoga* . Here also the practice of ahimsá requires that an aspirant should not cause injury to any thing or living being through body, mind and speech . It also implies universal love and brotherhood . He adds fearlessness (abhaya) and faith-in - God (Isvare Bisvasa) to the five vows of Yama. The only difference is that Gandhi interprets these virtues in his own way . He interpreted these virtues so that they may be consistent with the needs of the time and the conditions of existence prevalent at the time . These virtues should be practised not only outwardly, but in thought, speech and action . The aim of moral activities is the attainment of purity and the perfect purity can be attained only when a person is virtuous not only in deeds, but also in thought and speech. So internal purity is very important in this respect .

Non-violence is an eternal, not an accidental , Gandhi could not realise it as a means to the truth. Non-violence is a means to the truth for all the religions and philosophies of the world , except the *Carvaka*. In Harijan , he himself has said that he does not claim to teach any new principle . He only is his own way tried to apply the eternal truths to the daily life and problem . Again , Gandhi himself says, "I have nothing new to teach the world . Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills . All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scales as I could . In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors . Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments . In the practice of truth and non- violence .... In fact it was in the course of my pursuits of truth that I discovered non- violence ."[2] He says, 'Non- violence is the law of our species."[3] He explained more clearly the transition from the notion of truth to the notion of Non- violence and says , "*Ahimsá* and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse which the reverse? Ahimsá is the means, truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach and so ahimsá is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means , we are bound to reach the end sooner or later ."[4]

Usually, *'Ahimsá '* means non-killing . The negative import of *'Ahimsá '* means not causing harm to others in words, deeds and thoughts . So, *'Ahimsá '* means non- injury. In any sense , *'Ahimsá '* us opposite of *himsa*. Gandhi admits this and adds much more to its content . To him, himsa means causing pain or killing any life out of anger or with the intention of injury or from a selfish purpose . Absence of doing all these is called *ahimsá* . Non- killing can be divided into two ways non- killing of human and non- killing of non- human. Non-human may be divided into animals , birds, fishes,

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worms and insects, plants and inanimate matter . Non-injury includes non- injury of people's bodies or minds or both as well as non damaging materials . Indirect non- injury also is equally important[5] . Non- injury includes non- exploitation, equality, justice, etc.

According to Gandhi, injury to life can be an act of violence only under certain conditions. Anger, pride, hatred, selfishness, bad intention and similar considerations are these conditions . Any harm to life done under these motives is *himsa*. Hence, the negative meaning of *ahimsá* is non- killing or non- injury . So non- violent act is free from anger, malice, hatred and the like .

Ahimsá is not merely refraining from causing harm to life, it stands for certain positive attitudes towards other living beings and one should cultivate these positive attitudes. For Gandhi, *ahimsá* represents one of the basic and essential qualities of mankind . This does not imply that *himsá* has no place in life. Even one has to commit *himsá* of one kind or the other in maintaining one's existence . Even when violence appears to do some good, the good that results is purely temporary . Nothing permanent can be built by violence. Those who have even with sincere and honest motives , ousted the greedy and the dishonest by using brute before against them (violent) , have in their turn, become a prey to those very evil things with which the dishonest persons had suffered . We can know this fact from History .

Gandhi illustrates it in various ways. If we search the course of evolution we shall find that although in the initial stage brute force appeared to be dominant the progress of evolution is towards *ahimsá* . In fact, in the case of a species we find that no creature eat or destroy its own offsprings . Particularly in the case of a man this fact is more prominent . Man is both body and self . Body indicates physical power and so on occasions, do *himsá* but man's true nature consists in spiritual power . Man as spirit is essentially non-violent . The evidence of this fact is that while body or the senses can be injured the self can never be injured . So *himsá* is not the nature of man if his own . When the spiritual side of man is awakened , the non- violent nature of man becomes apparent[6] .

Love is a type of feeling of oneness . In case of love one identifies with the object of his love and it is not possible if he does not try to free his mind from such type of disposition , which prevents the spontaneous outflow of love . So *ahimsá* claims a sincere attempt to free mind from feelings e.g. , hatred, anger, revenge, jealousy, malice etc. for these create disturbance in the path of love . To Gandhi, love is the power that purifies one's inner life and develops him and hence, love includes such noble feelings like compassion, benevolence, tolerance, forgiveness, generosity, sympathy, kindness etc. To love is a very difficult discipline. But it is easy to hate . In case of love, it requires supreme energy and strength . The task becomes still more difficult when one is required to love a person who is ordinary regarded as an opponent . So non-violent is

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meant for the strong but not for the weak . This can be shown in a very simple way. Violence is essentially an expression of weakness . An inwardly weak persons develops a sort of a fear and out of fear starts arming himself against real or imaginary enemies . Violence may have the appearance to strength. But it is born out of fear and hence it is a sign of weakness . One who has conquered fear can be truly non-violent . The capacity to kill is not a sign of strength ; the strength to die for non-violence is the real strength . Only when one has this strength in him he can claim to have risen above fear and is able to practise non-violence . He says, "A helpless mouse is not non- violent because he is always eaten by the pussy . He would gladly eat the murderess if he could"[7]. Again he says ,"Nonviolence presupposes the ability to strike"[8] One who is exercising *ahimsá* has the strength to overpower his so called opponent, and yet he practises *ahimsá* because *ahimsá* is a conscious and deliberate restrain put upon as a desire for vengeance "[9] . In other words, the really strong wins not by brute force, but by fearless love .

Hence, non-violence is a dyatnmic process involving continuous and persistent deliberations, strains, efforts and actions . It is true that non-violence needs extreme patience on the part of one who is using this method, but this patience is not a sign of inactivity , it is an expression of a conscious and inner effort to force the so called opponent to see and realise

According to Gandhi, *ahimsá* can be practised all children , young men, women and grown up people of all places and times and even by societies or nations . In connection with the practice of *ahimsá* there is a supreme condition . If one has no living and in flinching faith in God, *ahimsá* cannot be practised. An inner strength is necessary for the practice of *ahimsá* and this strength can only be generated by a living faith in God. A sincere faith in God will make man see that all human beings are fellow-beings and essentially one. In this way, the love of God would turn into a love of humanity, and this love of humanity alone can make possible the practice of *ahimsa*. It is a result of the realisation of the unity of mankind that one will be able to love his fellow-beings. Therefore, the most fundamental condition for the practice of *ahimsa* .

The traditional concept of *ahimsa* is a basis for Gandhi's concept of it, though he has widened the concept. Gandhi's principle of *ahimsa* comes from Indian philosophical tradition which has its root in the Vedas. Most of the hymns of the Vedas and Upanisads are full of a feeling of loving, kindness, non-hatred, righteousness towards all. In the Vedas the people prayed to God India to instill in them fearlessness from all, from friend, foe, known, unknown, day and night. Fearlessness, after Gandhi, is one of the qualities of a non-violent person. The description in the Vedas very clearly states that in the ancient days of the Vedas non-violence is practised in the real sense of the term. Recitation of some of the verses of the Upanisads was a part of Gandhi's daily prayer. These verses are mainly from the *Brhadaranyaka, the* Chhandogya, the *Is' a,* the Kama and the Mundaka Upanisads. These Upanisads greatly influenced Gandhi's Philosophy. The Upanisads lend a strong support to *ahimsa.*